

Resources to Implement Housing First

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What Housing First Means to Us

- Housing First (HF) is a **proven method** and **clinical practice** to end homelessness.
 - Works for individuals and families
 - Works in many different program models
- Housing First programs offer:
 - Immediate, low-threshold access to permanent housing
 - No admission requirements for treatment, sobriety, program compliance or income
- Yields better housing retention, lower returns to homelessness and reduced crisis services and institutional care



Guiding Principles

- Everyone is “houseable.”
- One size does not fit all.
- Our work is to end homelessness, not to operate programs.
- Asking and listening.
- Creative engagement, not coercion
- Challenge the status quo.



Evolution of the Housing First Approach

Origin

- A reaction against “earning” permanent housing

Growth

- A distinct approach for permanent supportive housing

Evolution

- Community approach to ensure that, people with highest-needs are prioritized



USICH on Housing First

- Housing First identified as a core strategy for ending homelessness in *Opening Doors: the Federal Strategic Plan to End Homelessness*
- Identified as an Evidence-Based Practice within the USICH Solutions database, which provides 56 programmatic examples
- Support motivated by evidence, not ideology



How about You?

Housing First Community

- Broad adoption
- Shared vocabulary and understanding
- Regularly assesses and removes barriers
- Focused on housing outcomes

Housing First Program

- High fidelity to Housing First principles
- Known as a community asset to assist Veterans other programs won't serve
- Focused on housing outcomes

Partial Implementer

- Adopts some elements of Housing First
- Maintains some criteria not based on tenancy, e.g., mandatory services
- May not have reviewed program fidelity

Unsure or Opposed

- Weighing the evidence
- Bound by existing policies, requirements
- Not sure how program fits in
- Suspects that Housing First doesn't work for everyone



USICH's Housing First Checklist



United States
Interagency Council on
Homelessness

Preventing and Ending Homelessness in the United States

The Housing First Checklist: A Practical Tool for Assessing Housing First in Practice

Introduction

Housing First is a proven method of ending all types of homelessness and is the most effective approach to ending chronic homelessness. Housing First offers individuals and families experiencing homelessness immediate access to permanent affordable or supportive housing. Without clinical prerequisites like completion of a course of treatment or evidence of sobriety and with a low-threshold for entry, Housing First yields higher housing retention rates, lower returns to homelessness, and significant reductions in the use of crisis service and institutions.¹ Due to its high degree of success, Housing First is identified as a core strategy for ending homelessness in *Opening Doors: the Federal Strategic Plan to End Homelessness* and has become widely adopted by national and community-based organizations as a best practice for solving homelessness.

Housing First permanent supportive housing models are typically designed for individuals or families who have complex service needs, who are often turned away from other affordable housing settings, and/or who are least likely to be able to proactively seek and obtain housing on their own. Housing First approaches also include rapid re-housing which provides quick access to permanent housing through interim rental assistance and supportive services on a time-limited basis. The approach has also evolved to encompass a community-level orientation to ending homelessness in which barriers to housing entry are removed and efforts are in place to prioritize the most vulnerable and high-need people for housing assistance.

As Housing First approaches become adopted more widely, the need for clarity increases around what the Housing First approach entails and how to know whether a particular housing program or community approach is truly using a Housing First approach. Robust tools and instruments are available which can quantitatively assess and measure a housing program's fidelity to Housing First, and recent research has attempted to rigorously evaluate Housing First implementation.² For quick screening, policymakers and practitioners will benefit from this practical, easy to use guide to identify and assess the implementation of the core components of the Housing First approach.

¹ Lipton, F.R. et. al. (2000). "Tenure in supportive housing for homeless persons with severe mental illness," *Psychiatric Services* 51(4): 479-486. M. Larimer, D. Malone, M. Garner, et al. "Health Care and Public Service Use and Costs Before and After Provision of Housing for Chronically Homeless Persons with Severe Alcohol Problems," *Journal of the American Medical Association*, April 1, 2009, pp. 1349-1357. Massachusetts Housing and Shelter Alliance. (2007). "Home and Healthy for Good: A Statewide Pilot Housing First Program." Boston.

² Tsemberis, S. (2010). *Housing First: The Pathways model to end homelessness for people with mental illness and addiction*. Center City, MN: Hazelden. The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University. (2012). *Unlocking the door: An implementation evaluation of supportive housing for active users in New York City*. New York. <http://www.casacolumbia.org/upload/2012/20121907casahope2full.pdf>

- Intended to help programs, policymakers, and communities assess if a program is using Housing First
- Includes both “core” and “additional advanced” elements
- Also describes community-level implementation
- <http://bit.ly/HFchecklist>



Housing First Checklist: Project-Level Elements

Core Elements

- ☐ Tenant selection promotes acceptance regardless of sobriety, use of substances, treatment completion and participation in services.
- ☐ Applicants not rejected based on credit history, rental history, minor criminal convictions or other so-called indicators of “housing readiness.”
- ☐ Accepts referrals directly from shelters, street outreach, drop-in centers and other parts of crisis response system.
- ☐ Services emphasize engagement over therapeutic goals. Services plans highly tenant-driven without preset goals. Participation in services not a condition of tenancy.
- ☐ Use of alcohol or drugs in and of itself not considered a reason for eviction.



Housing First Checklist: Project-Level Elements

Additional Elements Found in Advanced Models:

- ☐ Applicants prioritized based on duration/chronicity of homelessness, vulnerability or high utilization of crisis services.
- ☐ Tenants given flexibility in rent payments; given special arrangements for arrears such as payment plans or financial management (e.g. rep payee).
- ☐ Case managers trained in motivational interviewing and client-centered counseling.
- ☐ Harm reduction-informed services engages tenants in non-judgmental communication regarding drug/alcohol use and offers education on avoidance of risky behaviors.
- ☐ Building/apartment includes physical features that accommodate disabilities, reduce harm and promote health.



Housing First Checklist: Community-Level Elements

- ☐ Crisis response system recognize roles in housing advocacy and rapid connection to permanent housing.
- ☐ Strong referral linkages between crisis response system and permanent housing.
- ☐ Unified, streamlined, and user-friendly process for applying for rapid re-housing, permanent supportive housing and/or other housing interventions.
- ☐ Coordinated assessment system for matching people to the most appropriate housing and services.



Housing First Checklist: Community-Level Elements

- ☐ Community-level data-driven approach to prioritize highest need cases for housing assistance (lengths of homelessness, vulnerability or high utilization of crisis services).
- ☐ Policymakers, funders and providers collaboratively plan and direct resources to increase affordable and supportive housing and ensure a range of options and models.
- ☐ Policies and regulations aligned with the Housing First approach.
- ☐ Every effort made to transfer a tenant from one housing situation to another, if a tenancy is in jeopardy. Whenever possible eviction back into homelessness is avoided.



What Does Housing First Mean for Transitional Housing?

- Housing First is not just for Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH).
- Transitional Housing also aims to help participants live stably and independently.
- Transitional Housing programs can incorporate Housing First into their programs by:
 - Providing low-barrier admission
 - Delivering housing-focused services
 - Helping residents transition to appropriate housing quickly
- Where participants transition to depends on their needs – to PSH or to other affordable housing



USICH's Solutions Database

The screenshot shows the USICH website's 'Housing First' page. The header includes the USICH logo, the text 'United States Interagency Council on Homelessness', and the motto 'No one should experience homelessness. No one should be without a safe, stable place to call home.' Navigation links include Resources, USICH Blog, Opening Doors, Partners, Take Action, Media Center, and About USICH. A search bar and a 'SHARE THIS PAGE' button are also visible.

Housing First

Browse the Solutions Database

Sponsoring Agency or Organization:
Location:
Plan Objective:
Affordable and Supportive Housing, Homeless Crisis Response, Improving Health, Well Being and Stability
Population:
Chronic
Profile Type:
Evidence-Based Practice

Housing First is an approach that offers permanent, affordable housing as quickly as possible for individuals and families experiencing homelessness, and then provides the supportive services and connections to the community-based supports people need to keep their housing and avoid returning to homelessness. Housing provides a foundation from which a person or family can access the services and supports they need to achieve stability, begin the recovery process, and pursue personal goals. While Housing First can be used in both short- and long-term interventions, the approach is closely tied to permanent supportive housing and therefore discussed in this context here. The Housing First approach can be applied to rapid re-housing as well.

Problem or Challenge:

Traditionally, many housing providers have required people experiencing homelessness to demonstrate "housing readiness" either by achieving sobriety or entering treatment before offering permanent housing. The housing readiness approach can lead to people with relatively fewer needs accessing service-intensive housing, while people with more complex problems remain in shelters or on the streets. Housing First permanent supportive housing was created when a new approach was sought to help people with long histories of homelessness secure housing.

Solution:

Housing First is an approach that offers permanent housing as quickly as possible for people experiencing homelessness, especially for people with long histories of homelessness and co-occurring health challenges, while providing the supportive services people need to keep their housing and avoid returning to homelessness.

The approach begins with an **immediate focus on helping individuals and families get housing**. Income,

- Summary of research
- List of model programs
- Frequently asked questions (FAQs)

http://usich.gov/usich_resources/solutions/explore/housing_first/



VA's Housing First Implementation Brief

- Summary of VA's transformation to adopt Housing First approaches across its homelessness programs
- Reviews findings and lessons learned from HUD-VASH Housing First pilot, including key outcomes and cost impacts
- <http://bit.ly/VA-HF-Brief>

VA National Center on Homelessness Among Veterans | U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs



HOUSING FIRST IMPLEMENTATION BRIEF

April 2014

Ann Elizabeth Montgomery, PhD; Lindsay Hill; Dennis P. Culhane, PhD; Vincent Kane, MSS

The current Administration set a bold and ambitious goal to end chronic and Veteran homelessness by 2015.¹ To accomplish this mission, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) launched a comprehensive, evidence-based, data- and outcome-driven strategy supported by significant local and federal partnerships and a considerable financial commitment. VA has transformed its service model to be more "person-centered" and focused on solutions—including collaborative community-based treatment and supportive services—to prevent and end Veteran homelessness. This approach has greatly increased access to healthcare, benefits, employment services, and permanent housing solutions for Veterans who are homeless or at risk.²

Initial results of this transformation are promising: between 2010 and 2013, the number of Veterans experiencing homelessness on a single night in January decreased by 24% (76,329 to 57,849).³ This significant reduction in homelessness among Veterans is particularly notable as this progress has occurred during one of the worst recessions our country has faced, characterized by an affordable housing crisis and approximately 46.5 million people living in poverty.⁴

THE HOUSING FIRST MODEL

A primary example of VA's transformation is its decision to adopt, as national policy, a Housing First approach for its homeless programs. Housing First is a low-barrier, supportive housing model that emphasizes permanent supportive housing to end homelessness.⁵ This approach provides individuals who are experiencing homelessness—particularly those who have been homeless for prolonged periods and have disabling conditions such as schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, recurrent major depression, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and addictive disorders—with permanent housing as quickly as possible and supportive services as needed. The Housing First approach provides housing without prerequisites for abstinence, psychiatric stability, or completion of treatment programs.⁶

Instead, the Housing First approach provides permanent housing as the *initial* service, followed by other supports based on the individual's needs and preferences. However, Housing First is not housing only; the model has a significant clinical service component: community-based clinical case management teams provide 24-hour, 7-days-a-week access to services including crisis intervention, financial management, landlord and family mediation, employment, community reintegration, and access to mental health, primary care, and addictions treatment.⁷

VA'S HOUSING FIRST PILOT

Before Housing First was declared official VA policy, the VA National Center on Homelessness Among Veterans (NCHAV) implemented an initiative to evaluate the approach within the context of VA and to advance the implementation and early adoption of the model within VA's supported housing program, HUD-VASH. HUD-VASH is a joint effort between the U.S. Department of Housing

Promoting data-driven, evidence-based solutions to end Veteran homelessness

4100 Chester Avenue, Suite 201 | Philadelphia, PA 19104 | 215.823.5800 x 6713 | www.endveteranhomelessness.org



USICH & NCHV Webinar Series

Opening Doors to Innovation: How to Improve Client Outcomes Using Housing First + SHARE THIS PAGE

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Opening Doors to Innovation: How to Improve Client Outcomes Using Housing First

JSICH and the National Coalition for Homeless Veterans host a discussion on how Housing First practices can improve client outcomes in a transitional housing setting and help our Nation's Veterans and others who experience homelessness move more quickly into permanent housing.

Participating in the conversation is Dr. Josh Zamberger from the San Francisco Department of Health, Dr. Tom O'Toole from Veterans Affairs Medical Center Providence, RI, and Sue Smith and Antoine Parks from Project H.O.M.E. in Philadelphia, PA. The panel discusses the clinical dimensions of Housing First and how it helps to deliver improved care to clients and speed up their transitions into permanent housing.

On this webinar you will learn more about Housing First as a clinical practice from healthcare providers in both community and VA-based settings. You'll also hear from a local transitional housing provider for Veterans who innovated their program with Housing First principles to enhance the success housing veterans experiencing homelessness.



Opening Doors to Innovation: How to Improve Client Outcomes Using Housing First

Download associated files
Slides: How to Improve Client Outcomes Using Housing First

Opening Doors to Innovation



- Four-part series focused on:
 - Impact of Housing First on outcomes
 - Removing barriers to services
 - Placement and retention strategies
 - Coordination with other community resources
- <http://bit.ly/HFseries>



Housing First conference sessions

Housing First & Systems Change

HOME ABOUT HFPC 2014 CONFERENCE PAST EVENTS CONTACT US

2014 CONFERENCE: CHICAGO

MARCH 12TH - SESSION 1 : 9:30 AM - 10:30 AM

Are we there yet - Ernst

Empowerment processes in recovery oriented social work - Ottengrim, Andersson

Evaluation of implementation of Canada's at Home/Chez Soi Housing - Nelson

Finding New Outreach - Knighton

From Grants to Policy Practice and Pilot Projects - Hunt, Wilson, Kelly

H Pact Integration into Housing First - Hein

Integrating Case Management Psychiatry and Housing - Rempel, Burnison, Buchanan

Kick Ass communities use Housing First - Kaufman

MSHDA Housing First Rose - Oles

Picking Up The Pieces - Gartin

Rapid Rehousing Evidence - Taylor, Gale

Rapid Rehousing Evidence - Gale

Using Housing First - Downie

MARCH 12TH - SESSION 2 : 12:30 PM - 2:00 PM

Adopting Housing First - Ewing

- Two national conferences hosted by Pathways to Housing and DESC in 2012 and 2014.
- Presentation materials from many sessions available online.

<http://www.hfpartnersconference.com/sessions-2014/>



NAEH's Housing First Toolkit

**National Alliance to
END HOMELESSNESS**

About Homelessness | Issues | Policy | Solutions | Library | News & Events

Organizational Change: Adopting a Housing First Approach

 NATIONAL ALLIANCE TO END HOMELESSNESS
TOOLKITS | AUGUST 24, 2009
FILES:
[PDF | 525 KB | 26 PAGES](#)

This tool-kit explains how to shift away from shelter and transitional housing strategies and toward prevention and *Housing First* approaches. The *Housing First* approach encompasses a diverse range of programs but they're guided by a number of principles that can be implemented into successful programs.

This tool-kit is especially recommended for communities that are planning on using Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing program (HPRP) funds to shift their programs to *Housing First* models. The tool-kit outlines questions to consider before adopting a *Housing First* approach, the different phases and steps that are required in the process, a sample logic model, and other tips.

Housing First Principles

- ◆ Homelessness is first and foremost a housing problem and should be treated as such
- ◆ Housing is a right to which all are entitled
- ◆ People who are homeless or on the verge of homelessness should be returned to or stabilized in permanent housing as quickly as possible and connected to resources necessary to sustain that housing
- ◆ Issues that may have contributed to a household's homelessness can best be addressed once they are housed

How these principles are embodied in programming varies organization to organization; however, *Housing First*-oriented programs typically share a number of service delivery components, which may be provided by a single agency or through collaboration with other agencies, programs, or resources.

Housing First Service Delivery Components

- Tool-kit provides practical advice based on Housing First principles
- Encompasses a diverse range of programs
- <http://bit.ly/HFtoolkit>



Where to Go from Here

- Be clear about what you intend and unflinching in self-reflection.
- Consult abundant national resources.
- Engage your colleagues in honest dialogue.
- Take risks in trying Housing First approaches and see how they perform.
- Remember you are not alone!



Stay Connected



United States Interagency
Council on Homelessness

No one should experience homelessness. No one should be without a safe, stable place to call home.

Ending Veteran Homelessness

April 25, 2013

Pushing to the Goal: 3 Ways to Accelerate Ending Veteran Homelessness

With less than 1,000 days until the 2015 goal, here are three important ways to accelerate progress

The Administration's commitment to end homelessness among Veterans and their families remains steadfast. The President's FY 2014 budget proposal continues to increase investment in effective strategies including \$75 million for the [HUD-Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing \(HUD-VASH\) program](#) and \$300 million for Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) [Supportive Services for Veteran Families \(SSVF\) program](#). The Administration's previous investments in ending Veteran homelessness continue to show significant results: homelessness among Veterans is down 18 percent since the launch of *Opening Doors*.

During the April 16 meeting of the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness, along with representation from the White House's Domestic Policy Council and Office of Management and Budget, Council leadership reviewed progress at ending Veterans homelessness, recognizing that even with the progress to date, efforts must be accelerated to meet the goal of ending Veterans homelessness by 2015. Ending Veterans homelessness remains possible with the right investments focused in

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News from our Partners

USICH and NCHV Webinar on Housing First

"Opening Doors to Innovation: Improving Client Outcomes Using Housing First"

Wednesday, May 8,

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